

Harpsichord & fortepiano

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BOOK REVIEW

A Pianist's Glossary

by Eric Smith

Robert Hale, London 1998

96pp Price £6.99

This new little book is expensive, and may prove disappointing for some in that it contains no musical illustrations or plates. The plain text is an alphabetical A-Z list of musical terms that are especially relevant to pianists — performers, teachers and pupils.

Some terms could do with a musical example or two, especially such concepts as *fugue* and *stretto*, whose characteristics can be more easily understood with a stave or two of illustration. There are defects here. The entry under *fugue* draws no attention to J.S. Bach, but suggests that the entry under *stretto* should be consulted. Under the latter there is no reference to *fugue* at all, but only a slight mention of the word's other meanings with reference to music by Grieg and Sibelius.

Most of the entries in the book do in fact give references to music, sometimes helpfully and sometimes not. Obscurities will not help very much, and are really not necessary in a brief book of this kind.

Here are two entries from p.83:

Tasten (Ger.) keys: gliss. weisse —, glissando on the white keys, gliss schwarze —, glissando on the black keys: Schollum 7 *Fantasies* 6; Scho. Op 11 (1) die — tonlos niederdrücken, depress the keys soundlessly

tema/i (It.) theme (with set of variations): Liszt *Robert le Diable* due — marcato, stress both themes; Liszt *Sonnambula* ben marcato i due —, stress both themes

Definitions of well known, common words do not need to draw attention to music that is not very well known, and not often in focus. The name of Robert Schollum (b.1913) in the first of these entries is relatively unknown, and the selective list of his works in *The New Grove* does not include any piano pieces.

Under *tempo* on the same page we read:

tempo (It.) time, rhythm: a tempo, in the time of the piece, in the original time: a — 1, back to the original time:

Liszt *Apparitions* 3 ausser —, senza —, not in strict time; Albéniz Op.47 (6) . . . and under *tenerezza*:

. . . Field Noct. 8; Schum. Hum. Op 20, Op 111(3); . . .

Some composers' names and titles of pieces are curiously abbreviated in the text in a way which the reader may find disconcerting; also on p.83 we have Deb., Schub., Prok. and Sho. A list of the abbreviations used is given on pages 93-6, but as many of them are not in normal use and have been invented especially for this book, users of the book will take time to get used to them with the aid of the index.

Youngsters who look up *allegro* will not find any well known music to refer to, or anything easy of access: "Clementi Son. Op 50 (3) . . . Dussek Op 19 (3) . . . Mn Op 84". The "Mn" is a new way of referring to Mendelssohn.

It is hard to imagine young people being able to use this book with pleasure and to their great advantage, and piano teachers are unlikely to come upon any references to music that they will need to consult at once. Unfortunately the style of the book has been misconceived, and for all its array of Italian, French and German terms it is far too limited in its intentions. Here and there a great opportunity has been missed. For instance, in describing 'Bulgarian Rhythm' Bartok is mentioned, but there is no reference to *Mikrokosmos* vol.6 or other piano pieces.

In discovering the meaning of terms used by composers, a musical dictionary very often needs to be supplemented with reference to an Italian or other language dictionary. The general and ordinary meanings of words come to have a 'special usage very often in the context of music, and it is important for pianists (and others) to make use of ordinary language dictionaries that are easily available in libraries to discover the basic meanings of words.

Sad to say, Eric Smith's book does not seem to contribute significantly to the reference literature that pianists might need and find helpful.

Gwilym Beechey

MUSIC REVIEW

P. Justinus: *Selected Works for Keyboard*. Edited by Erich Benedikt.

Doblinger Diletto Musicale DM 1215 & 1216 (2 vols)

Georg Christoph Wagenseil: Six Divertimenti Op. 2. Edited by Helga Scholz-Michelitsch. Doblinger Diletto Musicale DM 1213 & 1214 (2 vols)

The publication of a selection of the music of Johannes Justus Will (or 'Justinus a Desponsatione BVM' as he was snappily called after becoming a Carmelite priest) allows us to confirm George Buelow's judgement in *New Grove*: "Although Justinus' music is not without invention, it is generally of less interest in itself than as illustrations of the various keyboard practices which he describes in concise explanations." Although there is some justification for printing the complete 1713 *Cembalum pro duobus*, the composer's single music-only print, it surely could have been fitted into one volume using a smaller type-face: the exemplars from the 1723 *Musikalische Arbeith und Kurtzweil*, which complete Volume II here, still leave one waiting for a full transcription of that treatise.

Of the music in the 1713 collection, Part I consists of sixteen bipartite Arias, Part II six Suites (a selection of Allemandes, Courantes, Arias, Sarabandes and Giques) and Part III four Arias with four (or, in the case of the last one, three) variations. Each group of pieces is written in a variety of keys. The compositional technique is secure rather than inventive. The Preface sorts out the confusion of the place of publication — not Lentini in Sicily (as in *The New Grove*, for instance) but Lienz in the East Tyrol.

There are only a few obvious slips in the editing: Vol.I p.7 b.8.3 LH should be G not A; Vol.I p.22 system 4 repeat dots missing; Vol.I p.37 system 3 b.2 tie too short. More damaging is the editor's rather arbitrary approach to editorial trills (why in some places and not others, e.g. Vol.I p.5 b.7?) and editorial accidentals (e.g. Vol.I p.20 Aria b.7 D# seems unnecessary; Vol.II p.13 Var.I b.3 the B# is also unaccountable). In addition, little help is given to solving the following problems: the rhythm of the Courrente in Vol.I p.27 is defective — surely it should match the second-half? If so, what about the quaver rest in b.14? Is a tie missing from the bass-line in b.22 of the same piece? In the opening Allemande in the *Parthia Quinta*, if the transcription is correct, surely the melodic line should be amended in b.1.2 RH to read (B_b) B_b CD to match the pattern found elsewhere? I also think it was unwise to bury the information about the short octave required in the Editor's Report at the back of the edition rather than in the Prefatory Remarks.

The selection of pieces from the 1723 publication raises its own problems. In the original the middle-part is shown by dots, and the composer indicated the filling-out of the texture with figures. These figures are realised sketchily here — but does this help the performer? Are notes to be added only when Justinus employs a figure? This is very unlikely — but the result of Benedikt's edition is to let the music veer uneasily between a skeleton texture and one filled out inconsistently. More specifically in Vol.II p.21 what does 4) above the bass note in system 3 mean? What is the justification for the editorial 4-3 suspension in the Adagio b.8 on the same page? What is the basis of the recommendation of putting the *petite reprise* on p.23 up an octave? On the same page, why is the figured 3 at the start of piece 6 left without realisation?

It is not that the editor is necessarily making the wrong decisions, but that he is inconsistent. Better by far to trust the performer and to give helpful guidelines in the Preface. Statements like "the placer [sic] must be familiar with the performance practice of the time and of the *South German- Austrian region*" (my italics) are not really much help. There is much that is worthy in these volumes — but I reckon we should have had more of the fun pieces like the *Capriccio Italianischer Faschauer* in Volume II.

The end notes to the edition of Wagenseil's Op.2 *Divertimenti* start with this disarming quotation from Goethe: "From a distance, one hears only about artists of the first rank and is often content with knowing their names; but when one draws closer to this firmament and stars of the second and third magnitude start to shimmer, and everyone belonging to the constellation comes forth, then the world, and art, are rich."

Not something I would readily apply to Justinus, but it is certainly applicable to Wagenseil, even in these remarkably unpretentious pedagogical sonatinas. Dedicated to his pupil ("La Serenissima Arciduchessa Maria Cristina d'Austria"), these six works are arranged in order of difficulty, as customary with these types of publications. They are a selection of fast and slow movements, minuets (and trios) and, in one case, a Polonaise.

The editing is commendably unfussy. I just wonder if an editorial # under the mordent in Vol.I p.5 b.33, Vol.I p.10 b.13, Vol.II p.9 b.11 would be in order, especially as one is given on p.22 b.19. In Vol.I p.15 b.65.2 RH: there is a missing slur. In Vol.II p.4 system 2 a

bass-clef is given instead of the required treble for the LH part. I also dislike the large type face which necessitates the splitting of bars between systems, e.g. Vol.I pp.8-9. The policy of non-regularisation might well be admirable in some situations but it seems unhelpful in places here, for example, not to draw attention to the missing slurs on Vol.I p.16 b.8.3, when they are clearly indicated in the same context on the next page. In Vol.II p.6 b.18 the editor should perhaps have suggested the dotting of the semiquaver rests, and similarly with the opening semiquaver in Vol.II p.14 and on p.19 the opening quaver. In fact in this last movement some rhythmic guidance would have been most welcome. In Vol.II p.7 the slurring in bb.33-5 over the sextuplets is ambiguous — is it meant to include the last semiquaver or not? On p.8 of the same volume the quaver LH passage is surely meant to be followed by a G? These are of course all minor points, but I do believe that the editor must seek to guide the performer, preferably, as I have said above, in the prefatory notes.

The editor states : "the *Divertimentos* [are] optimum preparatory material for coming to grips [sic] with the piano music of Haydn and Mozart". Well, however you might feel about the music of Haydn and Mozart, it is a pity to suggest that the worth of compositions like Wagenseil's lies merely in its relationship to the Viennese greats: on the contrary, it has a lot of merit in its own right.

P.H.

CONCERT REVIEWS

Beverley Early Music Festival

The Beverley & East Riding Early Music Festival, moved this year to the late Spring Bank Holiday, is an excellent occasion at which to sample the quality of music-making both by established and by newer British groups. Lacking a theme, as Beverley does, can be a distinct advantage in a festival, allowing one to attend, as I did, four concerts over two evenings and the intervening daytime without suffering from aural fatigue, the programmes covering the medieval, renaissance, early baroque and late baroque periods. The concerts take place in increasingly diverse locations each year (hence the ' & East Riding' added to the now clumsy festival title), although all the concerts I attended except one were held

in the Minster, which offers a wonderful architectural and acoustic environment.

The first evening concert of the Festival took place on 22 May when the **Tallis Scholars** presented a programme of 16th-century Spanish music. It has been fashionable of late to knock Peter Phillips and the Tallis Scholars: this concert, for instance, was 'musicologically incorrect' in that no attempt was made to establish a liturgical background for the music; no stab at Hispanizing the Latin pronunciation; the use of dynamics and articulation avoided the dramatic; women were used on the top part instead of boys, falsetists or high tenors (take your pick); the performance was *a cappella* — despite increasing evidence about the use of instruments in Spanish church music at this time — and employing more than one voice to a part; finally, costume was of the type string-quartets used to sport. How differently it would be done by some continental choir, or even some of our own cooler, younger ensembles. Critics opine that, after all, this is *Spanish* music and apparently there is no King's College, Seville.

We have fallen into the trap of believing that while the 'Oxbridge' choral tradition may have some relevance for English church music it is unlikely to be sympathetic to the music of, say, Spain, France or Italy. The Anglo-Saxons, so the argument goes, lack the necessary passion for continental church music (the Tallis Scholars look as if they would shake hands on meeting, not exchange kisses). This position is similar to that which was taken by early 20th-century Spanish musicologists, who, as part of the wave of nationalism sweeping Europe at the time, divined that 16th-century Spanish music had a highly emotional content lacking in other repertoires (e.g. Palestrina). We seem to have swallowed this myth. The reality is, however, that Spanish polyphony does not differ that much from Italian music of the same period (which is not to say that there are not some differences, most of them having their origins in liturgical demands): after all, both Morales and Victoria worked in Rome. We must be careful at all times in dealing with traits ascribed to the national character; remember that, closer to home both geographically and temporally, it is now well-known that so much of what we think of as the essence of Scottishness was in fact a Victorian invention.

So when we hear Peter Phillips' group we must consider the results of their performance carefully. The singing is impeccably in tune, the sound of the voices is heart-breakingly beautiful, the texture is crystal-clear, the diction audible, and each phrase is musically shaped towards an expressive whole. It may be that some of Phillips' decisions are 'inauthentic'; it may be that in the late 1970s we fell into the trap of believing that the Tallis Scholars' was the only way of performing renaissance polyphony (it

is certainly true that these days other groups are developing interesting and diverse approaches to this repertoire); yet, for all this, with such superb musicianship the Tallis Scholars still remain the gold-standard for this type of music, largely because, and in these days of deconstruction this is another unfashionable thing to say, they let the music speak for itself, which is not the same as saying they fail to interpret it. As testimony to their art, they can draw capacity audiences for a repertoire that is actually difficult to appreciate and is by no means full of recognisable names. They were well-appreciated at Beverley, and deservedly so.

On 23 May the **New London Consort** presented a programme of songs by the early 13th century monk, Gautier de Coincy. Gautier's main work, the *Miracles de Nostre-Dame*, is a kind of sacred *Roman de la Rose*: both are vast verse narratives which include groups of songs inserted at various points in the text. In addition, Gautier wrote further songs which are separate from the main poem. The music for all of these songs was generally adapted by Gautier from other sources — including both secular *trouvère* melodies as well as sacred *contratexta* — and only one setting in the selection presented in this concert could possibly have been written by the poet himself. The *Miracles* became enormously popular; there is no doubt that Gautier is an important figure in the history of vernacular sacred music and that these songs deserve to be performed more often. Thanks, then, to Philip Pickett and his group for giving us a chance to hear this important repertory.

So how does one approach the performance of this music? Let us start with the voices first, as we can be pretty sure about this — if about little else — that the music was probably sung in some way or another. The two sopranos in this performance, who sang together, separately, and even from opposite sides of the Minster nave, were superb. I had not come across Joanne Lunn or Hedwig Aberg before (although the former does perform on NLC's fascinating recent disc, *Visitation*), and I was impressed with both the quality and the control of their voices from the first note to the last: these are performers to watch out for, perfect in this repertory.

There seems to be a fair amount of evidence that Gautier would have expected instruments to be used in the performance of his songs; after all, one of them begins : " My fiddle (ma viele) would fain play a fair tune...". The secular origin of some of the music could also point to the use of instruments. The question is, which instruments and how should they be used? Pickett's choice of instruments seems to be inspired by Gautier's text: "We should sing of the Virgin both day and night as the Angels do. All those who sing sweetly enchant

the Devil and lull him to sleep." Accordingly the NLC uses a soft ensemble of lute and gittern (Jacob Heringman), fiddle (Catherine Finnis), organ and clavicimbalum (Sharona Joshua) and symphony and recorder (Pickett himself). This works very well, although in fact Pickett has slipped something rather controversial into the ensemble which needs further discussion.

The coy terminology *clavicimbalum* disguises an instrument that is in fact a harpsichord, albeit a double-strung, undampened version similar to that found in Arnaut de Zwolle's treatise, which is our first concrete source of information about the early harpsichord, although it post-dates Gautier by about two centuries. Nevertheless we can be pretty certain that some type of plucked keyboard instrument was around at this time — after all, a harpsichord is simply a mechanised psaltery. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, however: does the harpsichord work here or not?

The answer can only be a resounding 'yes'. Anyone who knows the pioneering recording of Gautier's music by the Ensemble Guillaume de Machaut would immediately have recognised the far greater imaginative and musical qualities found in the instrumental introductions and interludes to the songs as performed by the NLC. In particular, Sharona Joshua and Jacob Heringman's delightful dialogues between harpsichord and lute were utterly winning. Here was a performance that breathed life into medieval lyrics with boldness and conviction. Either the packed audience in the Minster was very undiabolic, or else the performance was very good, for no one was ' lulled to sleep' but instead listened with continuous and rapt attention to a concert that was indeed well-titled *Songs of Angels*.

The **University of Hull Early Music Ensemble**, under its director Graham Sadler, gave a fascinating concert of 17th-century French music in the choir of the Minster earlier that morning. The singers and instrumentalists (violins, viols, recorders and curtal) gave impressive and well-enjoyed performances of sacred music from this period. Particularly interesting was the chance to hear music by Henry DuMont and Charpentier, prepared in editions by University postgraduate students. Graham Sadler's brief but informative spoken introductions to the items were a model of their kind. The ensemble, in exploring this little-known repertory, is doing exactly what a University ensemble should do — providing an enriching and stimulating experience for students and audience alike.

In the afternoon I ventured out to the Chapel of St Mary the Virgin and St Everilda at Everingham, just off the York-Beverley road. The chapel is well worth a visit for its own sake, being a 19th-

century Italian-designed church with Italian bas-reliefs inside. This impressive internal space provided the ideal location to hear three young early music performers - Katriina Boosey, Alison McGillivray, and Robert Howarth. Their concert of recorder and viol sonatas by Dornel, J.S. and C.P.E. Bach, Handel and dubious Handel (Leffloth?) was full of variety, with a mixture of trio sonatas, solo sonatas with continuo, and sonatas with obbligato harpsichord. All three performers deserve praise and are well worth watching out for. The Finnish recorder player, Katriina Boosey, played with great virtuosity and a rather straight tone (very un-Brüggen) which was very fetching in its effect. The harpsichordist, Robert Howarth, punished himself with three obbligato harpsichord sonatas in a row, but acquitted himself with great panache and musicianship. I am already aware of the wonderful cello-playing skills of Alison McGillivray, but this was the first time I had heard her play the viol, and I have to report that she is a very fine player indeed. Her carefully controlled tone, keen sensitivity to the music and infectious musical spirit gave me a great deal of enjoyment. Concert organisers please note: book these artists now!

P. H.

Harpsichord Extravaganza

On 8 June 1998 the New London Consort, associate artists of the Royal Festival Hall, presented an event apparently unique in the annals of early music: the 'Marathon Harpsichord Extravaganza', a sort of Seven Players for Seven — no, sorry, Twelve — Harpsichords. This was as much a theatrical as a musical production. As six o'clock approached, the audience steadily filling the Purcell Room was able to ponder the open stage upon which the coming spectacle was to be acted out: twelve beautifully coloured instruments, arranged apparently randomly within windowless walls, were spotlighted from above as if from hidden stairwells: this is the set for a drama in which the main character — a mad collector of old instruments — never makes an appearance, although we might occasionally hear his footsteps from above while we watch the strange events taking place in his secret chamber.

Six o'clock was a necessarily early start in order to fit in an ambitious programme covering the evolution of the keyboard repertoire from the 16th to 18th centuries and from one end of Europe to the other. The programme was arranged by century into three parts, separated by intervals, the parts in turn subdivided into 'regional' sections, and the whole framed by prologue, epilogue, and two 'entr'actes', mostly of works by J S Bach. This was indeed a marathon, smoothly achieved by reserving applause for the end of each section and by moving players on and off the stage like communicants at the altar rail, each

preparing to take part while another was in the act of doing so. The result was well-paced without being hurried.

The drama began with all seven players entering at once like the Ghosts of Music Past come to bring the collector's chamber to life; only after the applause, with the entrance of their handmaids, the page-turners, did it become clear that the chamber was in fact a temple, the players guardians of a past civilisation and we, the audience, dwellers in a sort of Dark Age to whom they, illuminated on stage, would reveal the preserved flame. Conversion was instantly achieved during the prologue, the Allegro from J S Bach's 'Italian Concerto', in which the sound of seven not-at-all-shy keyboards played in unison was positively orchestral. Conclusion: if you've got a harpsichord, what other instrument could you want?

After the prologue the stage cleared and the journey began in earnest. In the first part, passing through Italy, the scene was set for the reverence of beauty, especially by Frescobaldi's *Toccata per Spinettina sola* and *Canzona detta la Vittoria (Spinettina sola)* performed by Jan Waterfield and Rob Howarth on an anonymous 17th-century Italian octave harpsichord and a Pesaro harpsichord of 1533. By the time we arrived in England the Pesaro harpsichord was richly resonant with a Grimaldi harpsichord (1697), under the touch of Gary Cooper and Sharona Joshua, for a *Pavan & Galliard* by Ferdinand Richardson. Rob Haworth again impressed with Byrd's *Sellingers Round* on a Flemish muselaar (Antwerp c 1620). The 17th century (and the 20th?) closed with all seven players back on stage for a jazzy interpretation of *La Bergamasca* — lively, fun, a fairground organ gone wild.

For the remainder of the marathon the stage was rearranged symmetrically: four harpsichords to the left, four to the right, so that half the keyboards faced the audience and half the soundboards. For the 17th century Jan Waterman, with the aid of Rob Haworth, offered her own excellent arrangement of Biber's Partita I in d minor for two violins and continuo — a beautifully theatrical interpretation. The second part closed with Pasquin's Sonata I in D major (14 sonatas for two figured basses) in which the music was ignited like a line of beacons from one player to another, only two of whom could see each other. Here the stunning and unexpected aural effect of the extravaganza — that of hearing music from constantly varying positions on the stage, so that the attention of the audience is repeatedly arrested as one musician after another takes light — was most clearly felt.

In the third part, Sharona Joshua and Paul Nicholson gave virtuosic performances of Royer (*L'Aimable* and *La Marche des Scythes*) and Domenico Scarlatti (*the allegri* from the C major sonatas K460 and 461) respectively. David Roblou and Richard

Ellgar, however, stole the show with a comic dialogue in Mozart's Sonata in C major K19d ("A duet for two performers on one Harpsichord" 1789). This was an event at which all the players gave unerringly characterful performances.

So who was the mad collector — Philip Pickett, who oversaw the event, or Malcolm Greenhalgh, who provided many of the instruments? Perhaps a bit of both.

AH

York Early Music Festival

Two weekends at this year's York Early Music Festival are, as always, excellent opportunities to sample the current state of (mainly) British early-music-making. On Saturday 4th July, Emma Kirkby gave a recital of English madrigals accompanied by the *Rose Consort of Viols*. The recital was slightly disappointing, Emma Kirkby's voice sounding uncharacteristically tired (she had been singing with the Academy of Ancient Music on the previous evening) and the Rose Consort's playing too introverted for a public concert. The performances did "warm up" towards the end, and by the time of her encore Emma Kirkby was back on top form. The evening concert was a harpsichord duo recital given by Ton Koopman and his wife *Tini Mathot*. Again, I felt the music-making became better as the concert progressed, being quite magnificent in the second half's *Contrapuncti* from the *Art of Fugue*, and W.F. Bach's *Concerto in F*. The solos in the first half, both from Koopman (Duphly's *La Forqueray*) and Mathot (CPE Bach's *Fantasia in C*), were well-characterised and stylish, and the performers ended that half with an enjoyable rendition of Soler's *Concerto no.6*. Nigel North followed in a late-night concert with music from Robert Dowland's 1610 collection in a perfectly judged, sensitively played recital.

On Sunday morning the lively young *Quintessential Sackbut and Cornett Ensemble* gave witty accounts of a variety of music with the countertenor Timothy Massa. The instrumentalists played with confidence and aplomb. Here at last one heard a group which seemed to like making music together in public. The evening recital was given by *Convivium* (Elizabeth Wallfisch, violin, Richard Tunnicliffe cello, and Paul Nicholson harpsichord). I did not warm to Elizabeth Wallfisch's playing, and Richard Tunnicliffe's rendition of a Bach cello suite was ill-judged, both in its execution and as part of the overall programme. A solo from Paul Nicholson, who provided able support throughout the concert, would have been welcome.

Much more rewarding was *London Baroque*'s concert on the following Saturday lunchtime (11 July) morning. Much beautiful playing was heard, and the Vivaldi sonatas *al Santo Sepolcro* sent

a real shiver down the spine. Chamber music-making at its best. This was followed by the winning *Zi Lan Liao*, a most engaging player of the *ku-cheng*. Miss Liao's recital, together with her colourful anecdotes was excellent, and if you ever get the chance to hear her I recommend you take the opportunity.

On Saturday evening the *Yorkshire Bach Choir and Baroque Soloists* were not on form in their stodgy performance of Handel's *Dixit Dominus*, and the performance of Bach's Harpsichord Concerto in A which preceded it was also too weighty. By contrast, on the previous evening, Paul McCreesh's *Gabrieli Consort and Players* had given a superb recreation of High Mass from St Mark's for Christmas based around Rore's *Missa Praeter rerum serium*. A superb performance from start to finish. Even if not a vintage year for York, the Gabrieli Consort made sure that, at least for the audience at this concert, Christmas had indeed come early.

PH

Bruges Early Music Festival

The harpsichord and fortepiano competitions, together with its associated exhibition, should have made this year's Bruges festival a must for early keyboard connoisseurs.

To the concerts first of all. On July 29 *Davitt Moroney* gave a recital from the newly discovered manuscript of Marc Roger Normand Couperin. This was a well-delivered and stylishly played programme, and we hope to report more on this exciting discovery in a future issue. The evening concert that day was given by *Nova Stravaganza* directed by Siegbert Rampe from the harpsichord in a programme of Bach concertos including, in the second half, some concertos for 3 harpsichords in which Rampe was joined by Robert Hill and Gerald Hambitzer. Rampe's rather mundane approach to performance in the first half was transformed into something more jolly when he was joined by his colleagues. The strings of the Nova Stravaganza played dully with poor intonation and lapses in ensemble throughout the concert. The following evening (30 July) *Les Talens Lyriques* directed by Christophe Rousset showed how it should be done in a programme of French baroque music including some delicious Leclair. There was real ensemble here, and the soprano Karine Deshayes was warmly received for her performances of cantatas by Rameau and Montclair. On 31 July two old campaigners — flautist *Barthold Kuijken* and harpsichordist *Gustav Leonhardt* — joined forces for a mixed programme. These are popular performers at Bruges, and the audience's applause showed its respect for Leonhardt's still disciplined playing and the wonderful sound which Kuijken elicits from the flute.

The next day brought the finals of the harpsichord and fortepiano competitions. I shall refrain from naming the ensemble which accompanied the finalists in the Mozart Piano Quintet and the CPE Bach harpsichord concerto in d minor; they were perpetually out of tune, a feature which even their prolific vibrato failed to mask, showed poor ensemble and made far too many errors to be at all acceptable.

The **fortepiano** contest was very disappointing. Most performers showed little awareness of appropriate technique or style. There was a complete lack of diversity in articulation, no discrimination between the styles required to play J.C. Bach and Mozart, and a distinctly Romantic interpretation to Mozart's music in the first place. A first prize was not awarded, and for what it's worth the second prize was shared between Elena Privano-Karl from Germany, and Soo-Hyun Park from South Korea, neither of whom exhibited first-class musicianship in the finals.

The **harpsichord** competition was only slightly better. Again, inappropriate articulation, too-ready an eagerness to use manual changes, and no sense of overall architecture led to at best dull performances. Perhaps the choice of the CPE Bach concerto (although a wonderful piece) was a rather odd one for this competition. Continental Europe does seem to be unhealthily besotted with all members of the Bach family, as if there is no music worthy of consideration outside of that magic circle. The winner was Béatrice Martin from France, who played accurately but unimaginatively. With more potential in second place was Aapo Häkkinen from Finland, who however needed to have found a little more experience and discipline before entering this competition. Friends of mine also liked the fourth-placed Michael Sponseller from the USA. Bertrand Cuiller, from France, came third. To be honest, with this standard of playing (which would not be tolerated on modern keyboard instruments at even the most parochial festival), is it worth keeping the competition going?

The concurrent exhibition of instrument makers was lively. Many commented on how friendly and well-managed was the organisation at Bruges, and that the real benefit for makers was less to find potential customers than the opportunity to meet up with colleagues and friends. If I too had not met up with friends at Bruges, the whole festival might have seemed quite dispiriting.

PH

South Bank Festival of Early Music, London.

Philip Pickett's festival at the South Bank,

Heavenly Harmony (4-6 September), gave an opportunity to hear some first-class music from groups making rare UK visits. On the Saturday afternoon, **Rinaldo Alessandrini** gave a harpsichord recital, *Capriccio*, featuring music by Frescobaldi, Picchi, Storace and Merula. You cannot find a more intelligent and cogent approach to this music than Alessandrini's. But what really impresses is his grasp of rhetoric and *fantasia* that makes this particular language come alive. An excellent performance.

Hesperion XX provided the first of the two evening concerts. There are not many groups brave enough to employ one performer (Adela Gonzalez-Campa) just on castanets — although, as the concert proceeded, one realised she provided her money's worth with all kinds of clapping, stamping and even dancing. The sound the group makes is terribly romantic (in the sense of conjuring up a forgotten world, *Don Quixote*-like) — no more so than in Jordi Savall's viol playing, which is practically Casals. Add to this the 'flamenco' guitar of Rolf Lislevand, the spiced percussion of Pedro Estevan, and the delicious harp-playing of Arianna Savall, and you cannot have a more sensuous and irresistible combination. Except, of course, that the star ingredient — the voice that is like no other in the early music world, that of Montserrat Figueras — has still to be added. There were many moments of near ecstasy in this concert, perhaps the brief passage of Miss Figueras and Miss Savall singing in harmony at the end of the first half being the best. Here is a group of great musicians making great music, and for once I don't give a toss whether their performance of 17th century Spanish music is scholarly or not.

The second concert of the evening was given by Pickett's own **New London Consort** in their *Songs of Angels* programme reviewed above (see Beverley). Here the chorus was expanded to include male voices. I missed some of the intimacy from Beverley, and certainly the more appropriate historic environment, but this was compensated for by excellent performances and costumes.

On Sunday I attended the **Concerto Italiano** concert with Alessandrini again, this time with sopranos Elisabetta Tiso and Rosa Dominguez. The same virtues found in Alessandrini's harpsichord recital were found again here, with vocal music by Monteverdi and Rossi, and harpsichord pieces by Frescobaldi. Another excellent concert in a wholly worthwhile weekend.

PH

DISC REVIEWS

Consonanze Stravaganti:

Musica Napoletana per organo, cembalo e cembalo cromatico

Christopher Stembridge (organ & harpsichord)

Ars Musici AM 1207-2

This representative display of Neapolitan music from the 16th and early 17th centuries is presented in the form of a magnificent recital, in which the first eleven pieces are played upon the organ (in this case the wonderful Dionigi Romani of 1581 in the church of San Niccolò Oltrarno in Florence) and the second eleven upon the chromatic harpsichord (reconstructed from Praetorius' documentary evidence by Denzil Wright in 1987 and pictured on the CD cover) and a copy of the Italian harpsichord with some split keys of c.1620 in the Russell Collection (made in 1980, also by Denzil Wright).

I had expected a committed, thoroughly researched performance from such a well-respected scholar and teacher of early Italian keyboard music and the playing is indeed very natural and unforced, always finely shaped, with clear and meaningful articulation, rhythmic vitality and stylish ornamentation. It offers us a genuine opportunity to identify the forging of a style, from the existing Spanish element through the influence of the Flemish Jean (Italised to Giovanni) de Macque. I had not expected to be so excited by the wide musical range and variety of keyboard forms, from Macque, whom Stembridge regards as the father of Neapolitan style, as well as in the work of his pupils, so well chosen and carefully ordered on this disc which opens with the thrilling *Capriccio sopra re fa mi sol*. In the North of Italy, Gesualdo, son of the Prince of Venosa for whom Macque worked from 1585, and Scipione Stella heard Luzzaschi (Frescobaldi's teacher) performing upon Vincentino's archicembalo. Gesualdo's touching and somewhat quirky *Gagliarda* is included on this recording, as is Stella's bubbling little *Seconda breve Canzon*. With 31 keys to the octave, the archicembalo enabled any key to be utilised without the sacrifice of the precious pure major thirds of meantone tuning (which we hear to such good effect in the organ pieces), but it also extended the language by making it possible for composers to include the extra chromatic semitones. In Naples,

the more modest 19 note to the octave chromatic harpsichord was common enough to be used to good effect for further modulatory development in important Toccatas for the instrument by Mayone and Trabaci, and their teacher's *Seconde Stravaganze* of the first half is taken to yet more adventurous regions in the second half of the CD. Francesco Lambardo's lively *Gagliarda*, lighter in style and registration than those by Trabaci and Gesualdo, is contrasted with his sensitive, searching *Toccata*. The development of the next generation is represented by Giovanni Salvatore (possibly a student of Trabaci) in one of his two Toccatas, confidently displaying the expected Neapolitan surprise effects, and also two of his newer, more formally, constructed type of Canzone on both organ and harpsichord, in addition to an organ Toccata for the elevation of the Host by Gregorio Strozzi, the latest composer of the disc.

It is a delight to hear a performer so completely comfortable with the repertoire and such a good guide to its charms. I fully expect this CD to inspire queues at the British Library for Luigi Rossi's manuscript of pieces by his teacher, Macque, and others of their circle (MS Add. 30491), to cause a rush to obtain available scores of all early Italian keyboard works and to fill instrument-makers' order books for Italian chromatic harpsichords!

Penelope Cave

Andrea Gabrieli:

Pass'e Mezzo & altre musiche per tastiera
Fabio Bonizzoni (harpsichord & organ)
Stradivarius Dulcimer STR 33457

Claudio Merulo:

Toccate, Ricercari, Canzoni d'intavolatura d'organo
Fabio Bonizzoni (harpsichord and organ)
Arcana A30

In Britain, we seldom have the opportunity to hear the keyboard music of either Andrea Gabrieli (1533-1585) or his colleague and contemporary Claudio Merulo (1533-1604). Therefore, on the all too rare occasions when we do encounter this often exceedingly brilliant and seemingly improvisatory music, we are probably liable to find much of it brittle, highly virtuosic and, perhaps, lacking in matters of emotion, profundity and depth. It is not music that reveals all its qualities at one hearing (why should it?); nor is it music that is easily loved, if invariably admired. This is, of course, one of the great benefits of a recording - the continued encounter with something that is unfamiliar, in the hope that we

come to an eventual understanding of it.

Undoubtedly, Fabio Bonizzoni is the man best suited to this task, for he has immersed himself over a period of years in the rich keyboard heritage of his country. His seemingly wellnigh perfect and judicious blend of scholarship and loving devotion reaps real rewards on both these recordings.

For my own taste, I found that the Gabrieli CD was the most immediately compelling, whilst the Merulo was more of a challenge. No practitioner would, presumably, play an entire live recital of either Gabrieli, Merulo or Frescobaldi, for that matter - not in this country, anyway. Therefore, the music is best appreciated by listening to it in small batches, rather than at one sitting.

These two CDs also give us the rare opportunity to hear some of Italy's most historic instruments - namely, the 1519 Bizarri-Antegnati organ as well as a single-manual harpsichord by Vito Trasuntino (1571) and an anonymous 16th century instrument. Both the organ and the two harpsichords have undergone loving restoration and sound bright, forthright and tonally well-defined.

Merulo's writing is the more adventurous of the two composers - he dares more, both harmonically and in terms of his divisions and *figura*, than Gabrieli. This is, essentially, experimental music and it is fascinating to hear the different forms such as the Toccata, the Ricercare and the Canzona evolving through the pens of these complementary, yet contrasting composers. There is much figural audacity and some moments of great passing beauty collected here - and mystery, too. In the case of Merulo, one of whose passions was alchemy, it is tempting to ponder if there lie within this music elements that might have lain beyond the realms of mere tones and rhythms ... Whatever the hypotheses, there is much gold here and little, if any, base metal.

Richard Leigh Harris

Shakespeare's Musick:

Songs & Dances from Shakespeare's Plays.
Musicians of the Globe / Philip Pickett
Philips 446 687-2

The Musicians of the Globe's first disc, *Shakespeare's Musick*, concentrates naturally enough on music that is contemporary, or near contemporary, with the Bard. It includes all the surviving settings of songs from his

plays, plus arrangements of the popular songs and ballads mentioned in passing. Thus the disc provides a varied programme. There are pieces for mixed consort, lute songs, and solos for both the lute and the keyboard. The repertoire is of course well known, but it is performed here under Philip Pickett's direction with a remarkable freshness. Gary Cooper plays the virginal pieces — Farnaby's *Bonny Sweet Robin*, Byrd's *La Coranto*, Morley's *La Volta* (arranged by Byrd) and Byrd's *O Mistris Mine* — all from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. These are difficult pieces, and too often one hears the details blurred in splashes of impressionistic runs and scales, but Cooper is to be congratulated for maintaining impressive clarity through fine and detailed playing. Jacob Heringman's lute solos and accompaniments are also beautifully performed. Of the singers, I feel Joanne Lunn stands out with her beautiful tone, clear diction and general expressiveness of line. One quibble: the CD booklet, which contains a characteristically informative essay by Andrew Pinnock, is stingy in not giving the names of the consort players of the Musicians of the Globe. I also feel that instruments and their makers should still be acknowledged. And, while I'm moaning, couldn't the booklet mention the soloist(s) under each track rather than giving us a ridiculous key to decipher?

Although with only a harpsichord presence in the continuo part, I must mention a further disc by the same group — a performance of Thomas Linley's *A Shakespeare Ode on the Witches and Fairies* (Philips 446 689-2). The piece was first performed in 1776 with two of the composer's sisters taking part as sopranos. In this recording Joanne Lunn is joined by the equally excellent Helen Parker; but the quality of singing in this recording is all of a high calibre and it makes little sense to single out names. The work has become a great favourite with me, with its resonances of Purcell, Handel, Boyce and the Georgian glee. The orchestra is superbly conducted by Pickett, who typically brings out their rôle in conveying the meaning of the text. This is a disc that everyone interested in English music must buy.

P.H.

The Caged Byrd:

Music for voices, viols & harpsichord from a time of persecution Vol. 2
Sophie Yates (harpsichord),
I Fagiolini, Concordia
Chandos Chaconne Chan 0609

Just four pieces from Yates on this disc of Byrd's music "from a time of persecution". This is a very good attempt by Chandos' early music label Chaconne to lure audiences from other musics and other early musics. There are also fine performances from the viol consort Concordia and the choir I Fagiolini. *The Queen's Alman*, *The Tennthe Pavan*, *Sir William Petre, Rowland* and an accomplished *Walsingham* are presented with a good degree of flexibility and special treatments of the harmonic and melodic twists. An English virginal would have been nice, but Yates' choice of the 1994 early Italian instrument by Mark Ransom and Claire Hammett is a good second best. Overall the disc has too much contrast. Even before reading that the keyboard pieces weren't recorded in the same location as the rest of the music, I felt they were too separated in this purely audio context. With the exception of *Walsingham* it was difficult to feel totally at home without the visual aspect of a performance. This is no reflection on Yates' playing, which, on the whole, was secure and a delight to hear.

Martin Perkins

Orlando Gibbons:

Selected Harpsichord Works
Richard Egarr (harpsichord)
Globe, GLO 5168

This idiosyncratic disc is stamped with the performer's personality, but does perhaps lack the vetting and editing of the sort of production team found on one of the larger labels. Richard Egarr has made a number of recordings for Globe and I was sorry that the cover design did not follow the format of his Louis Couperin and Restoration CDs, which would have given us the benefit of a larger reproduction of the interesting lost portrait of Gibbons.

Richard Egarr has chosen to play upon two modern instruments, both made in Amsterdam in 1996. The pieces are shared between a copy of a Flemish muselar virginals by Titus Crijnen, the sound of which he describes as harplike, and a copy of a 1640 Ruckers harpsichord, with two 8's and a 4', made by Joel Katzman. Egarr admits this muselar virginals is too restricted in range for the complete repertoire and, although instruments of the Netherlands were imported, the English virginals would be my choice for Gibbons, one of James I's private virginalists. The Stephen Keene in the Russell Collection has the required bottom A and a good copy will mercifully sound far from 'harplike'.

A programme of assorted pieces, which

he groups into modes and admits is his "personal view of this great composer's works" is inevitably somewhat random, as indeed are the six in *Parthenia*; he mentions that he is "not accustomed to setting out performance manifestos" in his recordings, and that he chose those which would display the composer's "emotional and compositional virtuosity". He has deliberately omitted the two 'virtuosic' sets of variations, which is doing Gibbons an injustice I feel, especially as *Musica Britannica*'s editor, Gerald Hendrie, suggests that Gibbons' variations upon *Peascod Time* is even better than Byrd's, and comparison with *The Woods so Wild* would have been interesting. The market for this music is not great; all the sadder that a CD, devoted to a selection of the works of one of the great English virginalist composers, should not be more representative.

Egarr's performance does indeed convey his "admiration for Gibbons' extraordinary art"; he plays the music with passion, the voices are always articulately presented, there is never a dull or inept run of semiquavers and I found a lot of his generous rubato persuasive, but one suspects some excesses might have been curbed by an independent, alert ear; Klaus A. Posthuma is credited with the whole production. In the much disseminated *Preludium*, from *Parthenia*, one wishes

for a producer who would say, "but you cannot have your cake and eat it!" and some ornaments and spread chords, falling before the beat, might have been vetoed. Changing registration on the harpsichord, within a piece, can negate the advantage of the differentiation afforded between pieces. The listener needs to distinguish both the scale and the prime emotional content, without distraction, in such a major work as Gibbons' unsurpassed memorial to *The Lord Salisbury: His Pavin & Galiardo* with its reference to Dowland's *Lachrymae*. The opening of *Whoop doe me no harm, good man*, becomes more precocious than charming, on a single four foot. Despite these mannerisms, I would prefer a performance which is over-enthusiastic in expression than the mechanical, lack-lustre performances which have marked some exponents of the English Virginal school. Margaret Glyn observed that Gibbons did not shout, but his personal voice would eventually captivate even the casual listener who would keep returning to hear it again.

Penelope Cave

Thomas Tomkins:

Keyboard Music Vols 3 & 4

Bernhard Klapprott (Harpsichord & Virginals, Organ)
MDG 607 O705-2 & 0706-2

The two CDs submitted for review form only half of Bernhard Klapprott's recording of the complete works for keyboard of Thomas Tomkins. I notice that Volume 1 contains the much loved *Sad Pavane for These Distracted Times* and many of the more popular works, and that Volume 2 was nominated for the Cannes Classical Award. Volume 3 contains the massive *Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la*, lasting 15 minutes 48 seconds which, as Denis Stevens pointed out in his 1957 biography of Tomkins, "might well be marked for a virtuoso of remarkable stamina" and is all the more impressive following, as it does, the version *For A Beginner*. Volume 4 contains the pieces more suitable for organ. It is very satisfying to have a complete collection of this important composer, born in 1572, pupil of Byrd and the last of the English virginalists; *The Perpetual Round* (recorded in Volume 1) was possibly Tomkins' latest composition, in September 1654, two years before his death. Klapprott's articulation is always energetic and if he sometimes overplays the importance of the first beat, it has immense rhythmic vitality which drives through to the very end of each piece. With playing of this calibre, and without hearing the first two discs, I recommend you to buy the whole set, as I certainly shall.

Bernhard Klapprott, postgraduate student of Bob van Asperen and first prize winner at Bruges International Organ Competition in 1991, is now Professor of Harpsichord and Historical Keyboard Instruments at the Franz Liszt Conservatory in Weimar and the Arts Conservatory in Bremen. He has a thorough and scholarly approach to the responsibility of accounting for every work and thus, in Volume 3, in addition to the main 12 or 13 pieces, he adds an appendix of fragmentary works and the Prelude of Volume 1 with its alternative ending. The accompanying notes are equally thorough and specific for each piece, which considerably enhances the understanding and enjoyment of the listener.

As a devotee of real ale and unbleached flour, I was delighted to read that the Sound Ideal of MDG is to produce all recordings in a natural acoustic, aiming at genuine reproduction, original dynamics and natural tone colours, and Klapprott's well-chosen instruments do indeed sound very pleasing. The instruments used for Volume 3 are a copy of a Giusti harpsichord by Cornelius A. Bom and a virginal after Marten van der Biest by Klaus Ahrend.

Bernhard Klapprott gives clear reasons for his choice of organ rather than plucked keyboard for Volume 4 of Tomkins' unspecified keyboard works, and, bearing in mind Tomkins' fifty years of sacred compositions for Worcester Cathedral and the Chapel Royal, it seems likely that many of these pieces were intended for liturgical use within the mass. After the lengthy and brilliant 1637 *Offertory*, the last piece on the disc is the more restrained *Substantial Verse*, to which Tomkins added the words "laus deo" in praise of God, as he has elsewhere, and one feels that the whole substantial collection is truly played in such a spirit.

Penelope Cave

Purcell:

Suites and Transcriptions for Harpsichord
Terence R. Charlston
Naxos 8.553982

Charleston plays an unspecified copy of an instrument by Bruce Kennedy which has a clarity that makes up for poor presence throughout this recording. The eight suites are interspersed with various theatre-music transcriptions; most notable are the *Abdelazar Round* and *Fairy Queen Overture*. These latter pieces are more convincing than the suites, which tend to lack vigour and enthusiasm. Charleston's playing, however, makes up for this with unfailing precision and sensitivity of touch, helped by the sweetness of sound from the instrument. An excellent budget buy from Naxos (38 tracks), although unlucky that the disc took three years to make it to the shelves, thereby narrowly missing the hype of the Purcell-Draghi manuscript.

Martin Perkins

Tombeau:

German harpsichord music of the seventeenth century
Sophie Yates
Chandos Chaconne Chan 0596

'Tombeau' is a diverse exploration into the relatively unrecorded realms of 17th-century German harpsichord music. Chandos' marketing policy is to be commended here, with an appealing front cover that makes one want to take the CD home. Once home, a comfortable journey is had, if a little gloomy, by good programming with reasonable contrast (goose bumps from merely reading the sleeve notes). Many of the key figures of the genre are represented, particularly Froberger (three suites, toccata and the tombeau

for Blancheroche). Muffat, Pachelbel, Kerll and Böhm also have their say: Muffat's g minor Passacaglia from *Apparatus Musico-Organisticus* was my treat: Yates synthesises the numerous mixes of French and Italian styles in a homogenous way, perhaps too much in the case of the Froberger suites. Yates does herself no favours by trying to create the impression of a diverse stylistic player: she chooses 'darker sensual suites' (captured well on the cover) with minor keys in abundance. Maybe some Frescobaldi or Louis Couperin would have opened the window in this at-times stuffy disc. A good recording for an indulgent wallow, with very enjoyable playing.

Martin Perkins

Francois Couperin:
Works for Harpsichord
Gustav Leonhardt
Philips 454 470-2

In the case of many Couperin recordings, I find the listening experience to be more cerebral than moving - more to do with observing, rather than enjoying, the music, and where following the written score seems to clarify and assist the interpretation, rather than detract from it. Leonhardt's latest Couperin release, on the other hand, requires little from the listener besides perhaps reflecting on Couperin's preface to Book One, where he declares himself forever "grateful to those who, by consummate skill supported by good taste, are able to render this instrument capable of expression," and where he states that he would "much sooner be moved than astonished". Leonhardt's performance on this recording is direct and compelling: there is nothing perfunctory or studied about the ornamentation or *inégale*, and the technique is never allowed to obscure the musical character. The muscular articulation and vocal quality of Leonhardt's playing is applied with such sinewy suppleness and feeling of space and breadth that the music seems to be ardently singing to the listener.

The 65-minute recital comprises the 17th, 21st and 2nd ordres, the latter being slightly truncated. The selection embraces many aspects of Couperin's style, from the Bach-like polyphonic textures in *La Couperin* and *La superbe ou La Forqueray*, to the pieces in the lute tradition such as *La Garnier* and *Les idées heureuses*; from the descriptive character pieces such as *Les petits moulins à vent* and *Les timbres*, to the dance movements - both those which relate closely to the dances of the ballets and the stylised dance, as in *La Terpsicore*.

Particular highlights for me were the *Allemande: La laboreuse* (2nd ordre) whose dissonances and unexpected modulations are given space and breadth, *La Garnier* (2nd ordre) where the lute figurations exploit the resonance of the harpsichord's overtones, and the poetic *La Couperin* (21st ordre) which contains chromaticism and other striking harmonic effects, and which Leonhardt appears to relish by his lively use of different articulations. *La harpée* and *La petite pince-sans-rive* which follow it are also notable for their chromatic language and the darkly introspective mood which characterises the whole ordre. The only slightly 'false note' that Leonhardt strikes in this recording is his disconcertingly eccentric manner of playing the cadential chords in *Les petites chrémières de Bagnolet*; a superficial quibble perhaps, but exaggerated by dint of its closing the whole programme. Some listeners may also disagree with the omission of certain repeats in the second ordre, for instance in *La Terpsicore* where I feel that the grandeur and gravitas does need the full weight of the second repeat.

The recording quality is on the whole clean and gives the instrument a certain luminosity. However, the balance favours the treble and suffers from a receding bass which is particularly apparent in pieces requiring resonance on the low bass notes such as *La Garnier* and *La Superbe ou La Forqueray*.

A rather irresponsible sleeve-note failed to include any information about the harpsichord used for the recording, and, perhaps the more surprising in view of this being a Dutch production, made the oddly exclusive gesture of printing a substantial philosophical musing on Couperin's art in French only; the programme note for German, English and Italian was quite feeble and unenlightening by comparison.

Quibbles aside, this is an essential recording, both for the harpsichord aficionado and for anyone who remains unconvinced of the sensuality and depths of feeling in Couperin's music. It also reminds us of the considerable advantage in listening to Couperin on disc, and how much of the sumptuous detail of this music is lost on stage.

Pamela Nash

J. S. Bach:

Flute Sonatas vols. 1 & 2
Petri Alanko (Flute)
Anssi Mattila (Harpsichord)
Jukka Rautasalo (Cello)
Naxos 8.553754-5

The first of these two CDs contains the e minor Sonata, BWV 1034, and Sonata in E^b, BWV 1031, the Partita for solo flute, BWV 1013, and the A major Sonata, BWV 1032, while the second CD consists of the b minor Sonata, BWV 1030, the sonatas in E, g minor and C (BWV 1035, 1020 and 1033), together with the G major Trio sonata, BWV 1039, with Hanna Juutilainen playing the second flute part.

The first two sonatas, in e minor and E^b, reveal some lovely playing from this Finnish trio. The elegance and brilliance of the music is clearly discerned here and its effect in performance is bright and appealing. The e minor sonata follows the four-movement *chiesa* pattern, while the E^b sonata has three movements, the middle one being the popular g minor *Siciliana*. The unaccompanied minor Partita is not entirely idiomatic to the flute, and players have often found that there is not much breathing space at times, especially in the opening *Allemande*. Was it written at first for the violin? After this the A major sonata can be heard in a fine performance.

Wolfgang Schmieder in his thematic catalogue of Bach's music (Leipzig, 1950, 3rd ed., 1966) grouped the six solo flute sonatas in two groups of three, viz., BWV 1030-2 and 1033-5. They are all thought to have been composed during Bach's years at Cöthen between 1717 and 1723. Bach himself did not make a set of these works as he did with his various solo keyboard suites, and 18th-century sources of the flute sonatas are scanty. In the A major sonata the last of the three movements does not seem to be known in a complete form.

The A minor solo Partita survives in a copy which contains the six solo works for violin (BWV 1001-6). there is no question of its authenticity but it may be wondered if it was not played on the violin in Bach's day. Did he write other works for solo flute? None have come to light, but the production of one solitary example of the kind seems a little strange. Perhaps some of the movements in the solo violin pieces were also played by flautists.

The G major Trio sonata, BWV 1039, is thought to have been composed for two flutes and continuo in the first instance. The work was later (soon after?) arranged as the first of three sonatas for viola da gamba and continuo (BWV 1027). Anssi Mattila, writing in the accompanying booklet to these CDs, however, suggests that the version for two flutes was an arrangement of the gamba sonata. The last movement of the work is also known in an attractive

version for solo organ, BWV 1027a. There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of these works. Even so, questions have been raised about the possibility that one or more of Bach's sons might have had a hand in them, but this cannot be the case if they date from the Cöthen period. Their compositional calibre, artistic design and beauty of thought do not point to the work of any other composer.

The sonatas do not really fit together in convenient groups of three in the way Schmieder listed them. Two of them, BWV 1030 and 1032, have an *obbligato* harpsichord part, while two of the others, BWV 1034 and 1035, have a *continuo* harpsichord part that calls for a realisation. The A major sonata's earliest known copy is an incomplete autograph dating from about 1736, and some of the other sonatas may also date from the later Leipzig period of Bach's life rather than the Cöthen years. In particular, the b minor sonata is now thought to date from the 1730s rather than the early 1720s¹. In this long and wonderful work Bach appears to have presented the four movements in an unusual order, viz., slow, slow, quick, quick. From the listing on the second of these CDs it looks as though the work has only three movements, but all four are here! Band 3 covers the third and fourth movements, under the title *Presto!* As the order of movements in terms of tempo is so unusual in Bach, and in the early 18th century in general, performers might consider reversing the order of the second and third movements in performance to bring the work closer to the normal order of movements in a *chiesa* sonata.

The g minor sonata, BWV 1020, is an isolated work that is often played as a violin sonata as well as a flute sonata, and this provides another direct link between the two instruments for which some of these works may have been conceived. This sonata might be the earliest one here in term of its date of composition. It has been thought to be a youthful piece, although the dimensions and scale of the outer movements, especially the last one, point to a composer of mature assurance and very accomplished contrapuntal skills.

The C major sonata, BWV 1035, has an unusual scheme, and order of movements, and it resembles in an interesting way the format of the first Brandenburg concerto, BWV 1046, in providing short dance movements at the end. The combination of sonata movements and suite movements, of *chiesa* and *camera*-type pieces, is not all that common in Bach, but such combinations have obvious attractions

for performers and listeners alike in the diversity of an individual work's contents.

The b minor sonata deserves a special commendation here. It must surely be one of the longest four-movement sonatas that Bach wrote, certainly for wind instruments, and its extraordinarily broad and spacious design is full of memorable melody and counterpoint. The work reveals a composer as full of mastery in writing a large-scale sonata for a woodwind instrument as he was in writing one for the violin (e.g. the E major sonata, BWV 1016) and for the gamba (e.g. the D major sonata, BWV 1028).

These works for flute receive lovely performances on these new discs. Their tempi are all well chosen, and their relaxed and fluent accounts will be welcomed by chamber music enthusiasts as well as by teachers and students in search of inspiration and ideas.

Petri Alanko plays a 14-carat gold Muramatsu flute. He is principal flute in the Finnish Radio symphony Orchestra, and teaches at the Sibelius Academy.

Gwilym Beechey

1. For a detailed discussion of the the difficult problems surrounding the origins of the Bach flute sonatas, see Robert L. Marshall's article in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* xxxii (1979), pp.463-498

J. S. Bach:

Concertos for Two, Three and Four Harpsichords
Robert Hill, Michael Behringer, Gerald Hambitzer, Christoph Anselm Noll, Roderick Shaw (harpsichords)
Cologne Chamber Orchestra, Helmut Müller-Brühl
Naxos 8.554217

These performances were recorded in Cologne in October 1996 and consist of the Bach c minor concerto, BWV 1060, the C major concerto, BWV 1061, and the c minor concerto, BWV 1062, all for two harpsichords, the C major concerto for three harpsichords, BWV 1064, and the a minor concerto for four harpsichords, BWV 1065.

The playing on this CD is very agreeable, and the soloists and the accompanying ensemble give good accounts of these splendid miscellaneous concertos. The keyboard players do not offer much additional ornamentation and elaboration of their parts, but there are some occasional improvised flourishes which are very effective. The tempi are mostly well

chosen and the style of the performance is very pleasant and attractive.

The c minor concerto, BWV 1060, is the famous work that is thought to be an arrangement of an original concerto for oboe and violin, or, more probably, for two violins in d minor, especially in the light of the activity for the soloists in the third movement.

The C major concerto, BWV 1061, also has an accompaniment for a string ensemble, but only in the outer movements. It is often presented as a concerto without a *ripieno* ensemble, and the performance here is given by two soloists alone. In this form the work is very pleasing, and it might well be heard more often in this way in recitals of music for two harpsichords (or pianos) when other instruments are not present.

The c minor concerto, BWV 1062, is a keyboard arrangement of the famous 'double' concerto for two violins in d minor, BWV 1043. The keyboard arrangement may have been made by C P E Bach. Both forms of the work would have been played in Bach's lifetime, the version for violins originating in Cöthen about 1720, and the keyboard version being made in Leipzig in the mid-1730s or so. In the performance of the latter version here the first movement is played rather too fast, and it all tends to sound too rushed and hurried. In some of the movements in these performances, as here in the first and last movements, the final chords of the movements are too abruptly snatched off, giving no strong feeling of finality after an impressive contrapuntal argument. In the slow movement of this work the solo string parts are rather missed, as their more prominent sustained tone is normally preferred to the more fleeting sounds of the keyboards on the long notes. Perhaps some of these long notes, in the main theme and elsewhere, should be ornamented with long or short trills, and perhaps the movement is generally played too slowly.

The C major concerto for three harpsichords, BWV 1064, is a marvellous work that is all too rarely heard. Both the outer movements are brilliantly written, and the last movement, especially, is given a wonderful performance here. Wolfgang Schmieder in his *Bach Verzeichnis* suggested that the work had its origins in a concerto for three violins and strings by another composer (and who indeed?). This is an unconvincing suggestion in the light of the highly idiomatic harpsichord writing, particularly for

the player' right hands, and also in the light of quality and scale of the contrapuntal composition. The first movement has 141 bars in 4/4 time, while the last has 192 in 2/2 time.

The a minor concerto for four harpsichords, BWV 1065, is the famous arrangement that Bach made of Vivaldi's concerto for four violins, Op. 3 No. 10 (RV 580) in the set of works published about 1715. Bach arranged six of the set of twelve concertos Op. 3 (Nos. 3, and 8-12) as harpsichord or organ works, and most of these arrangements were probably made for his Leipzig concerts in the 1730s.

Vivaldi's b minor concerto was scored for four solo violins together with some solo passages for viola and cello. The *tutti* violas were subdivided and cellos were supported by basses and harpsichord. Much of the bass line was figured. Bach arranged the work in a minor for four keyboards with a four-part string texture in support. Apparently he did not figure the bass part at all, although an extra continuo keyboard player is needed, as the *ripieno* bass line is very often independent of the other four (even when they are all playing!). Bach's arrangement and elaboration of Vivaldi's score was brilliantly done, and he helped his players by giving them music to play in an easier key, and also by giving them a wonderful array of contrapuntal activity and interplay largely of his own invention. In order to appreciate Bach's ingenuities in dealing with a keyboard version of Vivaldi's score, see the first movement, bars 86ff, where passages of demi-semiquavers and trills were added to Vivaldi's plain repetitive rhythms, and also the last movement where the character of the main theme was enlivened by two very simple and small changes to its notes and rhythms. These slight changes anticipated much of the increased rhythmic content and contrapuntal enhancement that Bach introduced into the score of this marvellous reworking of Vivaldi's music. The two themes are shown in the musical example below.

In the performance on this new CD the third movement is particularly well played, and it conveys a very strong rhythmic grip and enterprise.

The booklet that comes with the CD provides commentary in English, French and German.

Givilym Beechey

J. S. Bach:

Brandenburg Concertos
Il Giardino Armonico / Giovanni Antonini
Teldec 4509-98442-2 (2 CD)
Brandenburg Concertos
Camerata of the 18th Century / Konrad Hüntemer
MDG 311 0746-2 (2 CD)

Cembalokonzerte volume 1
Concerto Italiano / Rinaldo Alessandrini
Opus 111 OPS 30-153

Harpsichord Concertos volume II
Academy of Ancient Music / Christopher Hogwood
L'Oiseau-Lyre 448 178-2

Harpsichord Concertos volume 1
The Purcell Quartet
Chandos CHAN 0595

This collection of Bach concerto discs allows us to directly compare different interpretations of the same concertos. First, however, a brief summary of what the three non-Brandenburg discs have to offer.

Rousset, with the Academy of Ancient Music, presents performances of BWV 1052, 1054 and 1056 (see below), played with panache and passion. This is the baroque concerto writ large as a full-scale drama between solo protagonist and orchestral *tutti*. Rousset is helped with his seemingly faultless technique and nose for melodic shape by a nonsense copy by Goble & Son of a 1720 Fleischer double-manual instrument, and a (too) generous recording balance favouring the soloist. Brimming with eroticism, this is the disc to give your lover. The violin concerto in E, from which BWV 1054 was arranged, is included as an appendix in the well-known 1981 recording with Jaap Schröder as soloist.

Alessandrini, with the Concerto Italiano, also offers performances of BWV 1052 and 1054 (see below), together with BWV 1057 and 1044. Theatre is here rejected in favour of the personal piety of the cantata aria. With Alessandrini bringing his renowned detailed reading of line, and eliciting a similar attention to detail from his *ripieno* band, these performances have a lot to recommend them — even if his Dulcken copy and the recording do give a certain distance to some of the works. As might be expected, the

'brainy' triple concerto for flute, violin and harpsichord (where Alessandrini is joined by Claudio Rufa, flute, and Francesca Vicari, violin) works best, and in places is quite ravishing. A disc to give your sister who has a predilection for ecstatic visions.

The Purcell Quartet play Brandenburg no.5 and the c minor concerto for two harpsichords (BWV 1062); the latter has Paul Nicholson joining Robert Wooley who is the soloist in the Brandenburg as well as in BWV 1054 and 1056 (see below). The approach here is strictly one-to-a-part chamber-music making, entirely appropriate to the baroque (and even classical?) concerto. Unfortunately, although there is nothing wrong *per se*, something fails to endear this disc to this reviewer. It could be the rather uninteresting tone of the Mietke copies played by the harpsichordists, or the rather unforgiving string playing, or an unrewarding recording environment, or indeed the rather metronomic rhythmic momentum, which deprives this disc of joy. One to give to that teetotal maiden aunt who reads Hegel in the original German.

Brandenburg 5

Il Giardino Armonico fail to excite with their performance. Michele Barchi performs on an instrument he built himself, which — in this recording at least — sounds faintly unpleasant, having a dry rasping quality. There is a whiff of the 'routine' about this interpretation that makes even a few sectional breaks in the cadenza seem mannered rather than developing naturally from the music. I also fail to hear the *ripieno* clearly when it contributes to the discourse. Yes, Bach marked it *piano*; but surely that was to warn the performers to get the balance right, not to surrender it to the soloists altogether, otherwise why would he have bothered to give the instrumentalists thematic tags? Balance is a problem to some extent with all the recordings under review.

The first movement, with its *concitato* opening, is one of the most exciting in baroque music, so it is a pity that the Purcell Quartet overemphasises the first of the two repeated semiquavers so much that we lose the essence of this theme. Robert Wooley plays on a silvery Mietke copy in a much too resonant acoustic. The flute is recorded too close, even overpowering the violin at times! The interpretation is virtuoso but rather prosaic. Whether Bach's cadenza is symbolic or merely a tribute to a newly acquired harpsichord, it is an extraordinary passage and surely merits some special thought.

The Camerata of the 18th Century, with Jacques Ogg as soloist, gives the fastest performance of the first movement — and the most characterful. The semiquavers are distinct, more of the *ripieno* can be heard in the episodes, and there is some particularly expressive playing, especially on the flute (Konrad Hünteler), while the sound of the harpsichord manages to avoid the disadvantages of the previously mentioned instruments. In addition, Ogg provides a splendid, well-thought-out approach to the cadenza. There is, however, one catch: the harpsichord is very distant. I imagine that in a modern concert performance this might be how you would hear it from the mid-stalls, but surely there is every good reason for recording this concerto from the position of the harpsichordist?

In the second movement, the Purcell Quartet just about have the edge, and here the reverberation in their recording helps to present a sensuous and silky chamber style. Il Giardino Armonico gives the fullest realisation to the continuo part and have the most extensive embellishments, but the end result is dry and even choppy at times. In the final movement this group do something odd by transposing one of the harpsichord passages down an octave. The Camerata again produces the most expressive performance, and is the only ensemble to avoid a vulgar interpretation of the viola *cantabile* solo. It is a pity that the distant balance deprives this performance of a whole-hearted recommendation.

BWV 1052

This, one of the most mature expressions of the baroque, receives two equally-excellent performances by Rousset and Alessandrini. The Rousset is recorded closer, which helps with the drama of the first movement, but overwhelms too much in the second. Both interpretations are dramatic, and the strings of the Concerto Italiano in particular do full justice to the rhetoric of the musical language: take the husky opening and closing phrases of the middle movement, for instance. Hogwood and Rousset offer a darker interpretation of the work, Alessandrini a more flamboyant one. There is little to choose between them.

BWV 1054

Again, there is little to choose between Alessandrini and Rousset — in fact, the recording balance is better for Alessandrini in this concerto, and shows his performance and instrument off to better advantage — which, together with a slightly more tense performance, comes close to inspiring an outright preference. As with BWV

1052, the slow movement of the Hogwood is particularly skewed towards the harpsichord. In this instance we must take into account a third interpretation, that by the Purcell Quartet. This is much more of a chamber music interpretation, which should in theory have much to commend it; I find, however, that the string playing is too under-articulated for my taste, and the sound of Wooley's Mietke seems a bit weak-livered when compared to the other soloists' instruments.

BWV 1056

Wooley and the Purcell Quartet's rather relaxed view of the music does have its attractive qualities. Hogwood and Rousset, however, play it as high drama, and release a rainbow of colours which make the Purcell Quartet seem rather kitchen-sink.

The Brandenburgs

Of my preferences between the two sets overall, I would plump for the Camerata of the 18th Century over Il Giardino Armonico. The latter's performance is not faulty in any way: in some respects the virtuosity, as we would expect from these players, is breathtaking. But curiously it is their rather lacklustre approach to colour and articulation (which made their first Vivaldi discs so noteworthy) that gives the edge to the Camerata. What colour we do have from Il Giardino is churlish, almost yobbish, as with the in-yer-face horns in Brandenburg 1! Balance is also not always sensitively handled in this recording.

By contrast the Camerata's performances are exciting (no.2 is almost like a jam session), but have the added ingredients of a well-thought-out approach to articulation and a continually expressive approach to phrase that makes the music dance or sing depending on context. Curiously enough, given the direction of Il Giardino Armonico by the recorder player Giovanni Antonini, in Brandenburg 4 the recorders of Daniel Brüggen and Konrad Hünteler produce the more erotic performance. The Camerata set is a worthy addition to the catalogue.

Conclusion

You probably already have the classic Hogwood-Rousset discs, so if I were to recommend one recording it would be that of the Concerto Italiano, especially for its fine string playing. It is a pity that a number of the recordings are hampered by poor understanding by sound engineers of what is musically necessary in this repertoire. One question: with apparently so little to say about the music (one almost senses

the routineness in some of these recordings) why do so many groups continue to record such well-served repertoire?

PH

"a duoi cembali":

Musique allemande pour deux clavecins
Attilio Cremonesi & Alessandro de Marchi
Harmonia Mundi HMC 905235

Duel or duet? The answer lies, I suspect, in a subtle combination of both arts and no more appropriately than in the three works by Johann Mattheson which open this intriguing collection of music by German composers for the rich combination of two harpsichords.

Mattheson (1681-1764) received instruction in the varied arts of singing, gamba, lute, organ - and fencing. The latter skill was, no doubt, begrudgingly attested to by Handel at some point after their famous skirmish. His duelling aside, Mattheson was clearly something of a renaissance figure and polymath, a musical giant bestriding the 18th century in his multiple role of composer, writer, lexicographer, executant and critic - a figure akin, even, to Dr. Samuel Johnson, whom Mattheson somewhat resembled.

In both the Sonata (track 1) and the *Treizieme étude* (track 6), Attilio Cremonesi and Alessandro de Marchi display consistent, often dazzling alertness, brilliance and sensitivity, as well as seemingly instantaneous empathy in the art of recreating and extemporising over a figured bass. This arcane, noble and extremely difficult skill is here brought off with enormous panache and certainty, as is the very different and more formal requirements of Mattheson's French-sounding Suite in g minor (tracks 2-5). The usual four dances of the Baroque keyboard suite almost evoke the grandeur and resonance of Couperin le Grand himself, so rich and elegant is Mattheson's skill in combining the two harpsichords.

Christoph Schaffrath's Duetto in a minor (three movements) may not be a major work, but it wears its parade of galant features with pride. Tuneful and thin in texture it may be, but the expressivity and sighing suspensions of the Adagio have their own grace and charm which is captured to full effect by Cremonesi and de Marchi.

W.F.Bach's Concerto in F has established itself as something of a classic in this not overburdened repertoire, but ironically this receives

probably the least convincing interpretation on the whole disc. Often unsteady in tempo with phrases unnaturally pushed forward, plus excessive deployment of *tenuti* at moments of harmonic significance and a questionably quick tempo for the first (Allegro moderato) movement, this performance is certainly disappointing and is not recommended, although the duo's ensemble remains tightly coordinated.

Krebs, favourite pupil and copyist of J. S. Bach ("He's the only crayfish in my stream...") is represented by his Concerto in a minor, a popular work written for the Dresden court in 1753. Competent and stylish in its writing, it duly receives a like performance.

With the exception of the W. F. Bach, this is a valuable and exciting issue containing rare material which is played with much verve and flair. The two instruments are both copies of a Mietke, one made by Alan Gotto, the other built by Martin Skowroneck; both harpsichords blend well and sound very satisfactory.

Richard Leigh Harris

J. S. Bach:

Transcriptions and arrangements of works by his contemporaries.
Patrick Ayrton (harpsichord)
Globe GLO 5166

It might be wise to issue a prefatory warning before listening to this recording; not in terms of the performance, I hasten to add, but rather to those listeners who are either allergic to keyboard transcriptions and / or resistant to the use of a 16' stop on the harpsichord - more on this later. For those of you who are incorrigible purists, stop reading now; for the remainder, this is in many ways a thoroughly refreshing release of works that are seldom or, at least, infrequently heard.

To the contents, then - these include six concerto transcriptions, four violin, one organ and one oboe original by Vivaldi, Marcello, Telemann and Johann Ernst von Sachsen-Weimar, plus a Prelude & Fugue in b minor on themes from Albinoni's Trio Sonata Op. 1. This latter work is placed at the end of the recording - a strange choice, perhaps - for its possible interpolation between two sets of three *concerti* would have given the ear a change of both texture and of structure.

J. S. Bach created these transcriptions mainly between 1713-1714, for the recreation and instruction of the young prince Sachsen-Weimar. Whilst

remaining faithful to the originals in structural terms, Bach clothed the bones of the harmony in his own inimitable manner, fleshing out and ornamenting melodies of slow movements and filling out the texture of the fast, outer movements.

Patrick Ayrton infuses his playing of these works with skill, clarity in the part-playing and enthusiasm. The harpsichord by Nicholas Macheret in Switzerland is a copy of a 1734 Hass. This is where our 16' stop issue returns to raise its authentic-or-not head. For our present-day taste, the use of this stop harks back to an older tradition of playing that for many players and listeners seems distinctly questionable. Yet, the specification of the 1734 Hass indisputably includes this stop on its lower manual.

It has to be said that protracted use of this stop can be somewhat wearing, yet it is undeniably effective in registral terms *vis à vis* the quasi-orchestral *tutti* of these Venetian concertos. As Ayrton argues in his own lucid notes, this was never a problem in the perception of organ registration, so why on the harpsichord?

To specific works - I noted that tracks [4], [5] & [15] were particularly effective, with a highly expressive and affective *Largo* in the Vivaldi-based Concerto in g minor, BWV 975. Less convincing were the rather under-powered opening octave statements of the Marcello-based Concerto in d minor, BWV 974 (first movement, track [7]).

Two final comments or thoughts: all six *concerti* on this recording have no tempo indication for their first movements. Does this imply that "*tempo ordinario*" (crotchet/quaver=80) is to be assumed? Secondly, it seems that the slow movements are the true heart of each concerto, rather than the fast, flanking movements. Listened to in this spirit, we might rethink our notions as to just what an 18th century Venetian concerto is.

Richard Leigh Harris

Antonio Soler:

Sonatas for the Harpsichord (Complete)
Volume 4
Gilbert Rowland, harpsichord
Naxos 8.553465

Recorded over a two-day session that overlapped with the recording of Volume 3 of this series (mid-July 1995), the indefatigable Gilbert Rowland continues on his voyage through the extraordinary Sonatas of Antonio Soler.

This fact alone, given the weight of the task in hand, might not appear to bode well for the current disc in terms of stamina, consistency and attention to detail. But these initial doubts have been proved groundless, as it is clear to hear. Everything appears to be in place and Gilbert's preparation and enthusiasm have combined to give us, once again, a disc which is weighty, full of variety and a showcase for some truly astounding harpsichord writing.

As in the previous issues, the recording venue and the instrument remain the same - Epsom College concert hall and a copy by David Rubio of a Taskin harpsichord. Clearly, Rowland has the full measure of this music (literally) at his fingertips. Time and again, he points up those seemingly small details - a quirky harmonic excursion, for example - that other players are apt to miss; all of this without recourse to over-emphasis and exaggeration.

Now to particular recommendations: Sonata No.41 in F [track 5], a hauntingly melodic work, only disturbed by low and ominous pedal notes and unpredictable modulations (a subject on which Soler wrote a treatise, published in 1762); also the two Sonatas in e minor (tracks 9 & 10), the first solemn and grandiose - the second, a swirling, glittery *Toccata-cum-Etude* featuring parallel thirds and much chromaticism.

Given the nature and unremitting schedule of Padre Soler's lifestyle at the Escorial monastery, it is a sobering thought to reflect just how much composition he was able to achieve - and all this on only an average of four hours sleep a night; presumably, not a nocturnal pattern which Gilbert Rowland has emulated. At least, not to judge from his playing on this CD.

Richard Leigh Harris

Leclair:

Sonates en trio op. 4
London Baroque
Harmonia Mundi HMC 901617

Mondonville:

Pièces de clavecin avec voix ou violon op. 5
Judith Nelson (soprano), Willaim Christie (harpsichord), Stanley Ritchie (violin)
Harmonia Mundi HMA 1901045

I shall start by saying that the quality of the music on the London Baroque disc, and the quality of its performance, is first-rate. Listening to all six sonatas in one sitting is sheer delight; there is nothing in the least formulaic about the

inspiration of the composer, or of the interpretation by the performers. Nevertheless, one still hopes that a record company will be adventurous enough to commission a recreation of a *Concert Spirituel* which, with its mixture of sacred vocal music, sonatas and concertos, could potentially show Leclair's music to even greater advantage. As it stands, this disc well complements Simon Standage's excellent survey of Leclair's violin concertos with *Collegium Musicum* 90 for *Chaconne*.

The sonatas, probably composed in the early 1730s, generally follow the same plan: prelude / fugue / slowish triple-time or compound-time movement / fast duple-time movement. This does not do justice however to the differences that Leclair introduces to make each sonata unique; for example, no.3 has five movements, and no.6 a wonderful *gavotta* as a third movement. The accompanying notes by Neal Zaslaw are disappointingly brief. The Italian influence on Leclair's work is traced but there is no discussion of why the Frenchman's music does not therefore sound the same as Corelli's or Vivaldi's. The cover shows a detail of Boucher's *Le Déjeuner* but, to my mind, there is more than a whiff of a *fête champêtre* in these sonatas, and it is this unification of court and country, French and Italian, that is the key to Leclair's unique voice. Perhaps the same artist's *Shepherd piping to a shepherdess* in the Wallace Collection would have made a more appropriate cover?

The performance by London Baroque is superb: it is passionately involved without resorting to the gimmicks of extreme tempo, overemphasised rhythmic gesture, grating violin tone or vulgar displays of virtuosity. If Leclair ever played these with his colleague Locatelli I should imagine a very different performance would have resulted, but I am more than happy that on this recording the egos of the two violinists, Irmgard Schaller and Richard Gwilt, are happy to eschew competition, and instead complement each other with the utmost musicianship within the confines of the *bon goût* demanded by this genre. What is even better is that Charles Medlam's cello and Terence Charlston's harpsichord (the latter's level of intervention within the texture strikes me as just right) are equal partners to the violins. In fact when I hear trio-sonatas played to such fine effect I have severe doubts whether the string quartet should ever have replaced them as the predominant mode of chamber-music making. If only Haydn and Mozart had been born half a century

or so earlier, we might muse; yet, acknowledging that it is probably too late to stop the rot, we are more than grateful for this fine recording of some really distinguished music by Leclair.

Whereas Leclair manages to create a new, vigorous language from a *mélange* of French and Italian elements, Mondonville's attempts, at least in his Op.5 recorded here, are far less successful. The resulting style is effete and enfeebled, a textual rush-hour failing to compensate for the lack of real harmonic or motivic momentum. Having blazed a trail with the invention of the genre of the accompanied *pièces de clavecin*, Mondonville now experiments further by treating the voice itself as an instrument. Whatever performing conventions apply here (Mondonville seemed to wish that the harpsichordist and singer were one and the same highly-talented person, and there is also some doubt about the role of the violin in those parts of the music where it doubles the voice), it is an experiment doomed to failure. The composer's treatment of the words stretches the listener's credibility beyond breaking-point; the repetition and fragmentation of the text is surely a form of *vocalise*? I suppose this is another step on the path to absolute music, denuding even the human voice of its personality.

The performance from 1980 — rereleased in 1997 — is probably better than the music merits. Christie reminds us he is no mean harpsichordist, and Ritchie provides discrete violin solos and accompaniments. Judith Nelson is in fine voice too, especially in the more dramatic last piece (mercifully cut short by the performers), although I wonder whether a lighter, more naïve voice might have suited the inconsequentiality of the music better? Perhaps subliminal suggestions have been made by the CD cover, Fragonard's delightful *Music lesson* in the Louvre. Here a pretty young girl is playing the harpsichord whilst her sweetheart is admiring, well, not exactly her fingerwork! At such a moment who could blame her if she forgot the words of her song and just repeated a few nonsensical syllables? A disc for *philosophes*!

PH

Leclair:

Ouvertures & Sonates en trio op. 13
London Baroque
Harmonia Mundi CD 901646

Since writing the above another London Baroque offering of Leclair's music, this time his final publication

op. 13, has been released. These works are largely (perhaps wholly) arrangements of his earlier op.1 and op.2 solo sonatas as trio sonatas, in addition to three *Ouvertures* or suites, each of which begins with a French overture: one is taken from his *opéra tragique, Scylla et Glaucus*, the others perhaps from now lost music written for the private theatre on the Due de Gramont's estate. Most of these works in their new guise are suitable for amateur and domestic performance and are given yet again superlative performances here by London Baroque. I particularly enjoyed Terence Charlston's vigorous approach to the harpsichord continuo part, which even included a couple of melodic echoes - a rarity these days, which is a pity because particularly in chamber music the harpsichord can be a key player. The movements I enjoyed most were those characterised by titles - minuetto, sarabande and aria. It is no mark of disrespect to performers or the music to say that my strongest reaction to this disc was the wish to go out, get the music and play it through with friends. A worthwhile addition to the catalogue.

PH

Seixas:

Harpsichord Concerto . Sinfonia .
Harpsichord Sonatas
Norwegian Baroque Orchestra / Ketil
Haugsand
Virgin Veritas VC 5 45114 2

Seixas is one of that triumvirate of 18th-century Iberian keyboard composers (along with the other two S's, Scarlatti and Soler). Of the three he is the least well known, so this disc is most welcome.

There are two or three surviving orchestral pieces by Seixas. On the evidence of the Concerto in A, and the Sinfonia in B-flat recorded here, his writing is pleasant but not terribly original. I wonder whether a slightly less relaxed approach from the Norwegian Baroque Orchestra, directed by the concerto soloist, Ketil Haugsand, might have helped. The liner notes say that the concerto is "one of the finest examples of this genre", supported by the following statement: "An original contribution ... rather than a product of the assimilation of foreign stylistic conventions, both in its purely antiphonal structure [i.e. the *tutti* does not get involved in the solo episodes] and its complete lack of developments, variations or other motivic elaboration." This nationalist lack of perspective, which we come across so often in notes on European recordings, does become a little wearisome. What

I think is hidden in these statements by João Pedro d'Alvarenga is that the concerto is parochial, conservative, and rather unambitious in its approach to form. That being so, one questions whether the Flemish *grand ravalement français* employed by the soloist was really an appropriate choice.

The orchestral music is followed by a selection of mainly one-movement solo sonatas. Despite a variety of compositional approaches, the thematic material tends to be rather neutral, and as with the orchestral works one looks for a little more *fantasia* in Haugsand's careful and polished playing—although admittedly I am probably looking for something that the music cannot offer. As might be expected, the sonatas in the minor mode come off best. The instrument employed is a Portuguese 1758 single-manual harpsichord which serves the music well. More variety could perhaps have been gained by performing some on the Iberian fortepiano.

PH

Wanda Landowska in Performance,
vol. II
Music & Arts CD959

Greta Kraus - Bach
CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corp.)
Records PSCD 2014

Puyana plays Bach
Mercury Living Presence 434 395 - 2

The recordings in this group of reissues date from the 1940s through to the end of the 1960s and for the most part display very different sound and performance ideals from those of the present day, when 'authenticity' of both instrument and performance style is the catch phrase, and much has been learned about the tonal beauty and mechanical perfection of the finest antique instruments. The **Landowska** recording is a collection of radio broadcasts from the early days of her arrival in America during World War II through to 1949. All are, of course, performed on a 'Landowska' model Pleyel harpsichord, an instrument which first appeared in 1912 and was used by the great Polish harpsichordist for the duration of her career. In addition to possessing seven registration pedals, enabling quick changes of tone-colour in the course of a single movement, the instrument featured a 16' register and lute stop (a row of jacks plucking close to the nut producing a nasal sound). Oddly, despite its heavy soundboard (piano thickness and heavily ribbed) and cast-iron frame, the Pleyel was scaled throughout much of its range like a

classical harpsichord (in fact, some key features of the 1769 Taskin, an instrument often used by the early revivalists as their starting point, were retained unaltered, including much of the original scaling, 8' plucking points and basic disposition, excluding the lute and 16' registers). Of course, strung in stiff music wire and quilled for the most part with thick leather plectra (exceptions being the lute register and the upper 8', the most 'classical' sounds on the instrument), the overall tonal result was thick and ponderous, about as far removed from an 18th-century harpsichord as one could imagine. Oddly, Landowska declared (quoted in the notes accompanying the present issue) that her intention was "to reconstitute a harpsichord approaching as closely as possible those of the eighteenth century when they had reached the height of their glory for richness of registers and beauty of sonority..." The modern listener will have trouble associating the false and opaque sound of the Pleyel (not helped by the recording techniques of the day) with genuine 18th-century harpsichords. Incidentally, the large German harpsichord which Landowska encountered in a music store in Paris (described by Allan Evans in his notes), and which to her represented the pinnacle of the harpsichord's development, was the three-manual Hass (misspelled in Evans' notes as "Hasse") from 1740, which Landowska's Columbian student, Rafael Puyana, later acquired and had restored in the workshop of Robert Goble.

The characteristics of Landowska's playing: driving rhythm, indulgent cadential ritardandi, kaleidoscopic register changes and articulations ranging from illuminating to downright quirky, are so familiar to harpsichord lovers that further description here is superfluous. Since these performances represent the ideas of one of the most forceful and original musical personalities of this century, it is churlish (and pointless) to attempt to judge the results by later standards of purism and authenticity, which (despite her own frequent assertions to the contrary) were very far from Landowska's primary goals. For those who are acquainted with the commercially issued recordings which appeared on *His Master's Voice* in Europe from the 1920s through to the famous 1940 Scarlatti recordings (made in wartime Paris with the sound of anti-aircraft fire clearly audible), or the American *Victor* recordings which were issued throughout the 1940s and 1950s the current offering provides interesting comparisons with the commercially released versions of

much of the same repertoire. The present CD, compiled from radio broadcasts of variable quality (the sound in the Handel g minor chaconne, for example, is almost unlistenable) largely duplicates material which is elsewhere available, in better recorded and musically more accurate versions from the same artist. Especially disturbing for the unsuspecting listener are the frequent pitch fluctuations which are a feature of performances originally preserved on magnetic wire or tape.

Although the article by Allan Evans (based largely on an interview with Landowska's assistant and inheritor, Denise Restout, and illustrated with a few familiar pictures by Roger Hauert) and the general format of the issue are admirable in most respects, a few errors deserve correction: in the present recording Rameau's second *Gigue en Rondeau* (from the e minor suite) has not been altered by Landowska to "make it more final", and the Handel g minor suite ends with the correct passacaglia (not one "from another source", although the atrocious recorded sound makes it almost unrecognisable), while the embellishments attached to the sarabande of the second English Suite of Bach are, in fact, Bach's own *agrément*s, not Landowska's as stated by Mr. Evans. Landowska's legendary sense of rhythm and timing, needless to say, transcend the sonic limitations of this disc, and her unique artistry emerges unscathed. The few wrong notes are almost comforting. Recommended to all but hi-fi buffs.

Another CD, this time devoted entirely to the music of J. S. Bach features performances by the Viennese-born Canadian harpsichordist, *Greta Kraus*. Kraus (1907-1997) was a friend and colleague of another, much better-known Viennese harpsichordist, *Yella Pessl*, whose fame was once second only to Landowska's. As Kraus tells it, she came to the harpsichord almost by accident, filling in once for Pessl at a lecture-recital in Vienna. From initial distaste for the instrument, Kraus came to embrace the harpsichord as her principal musical focus, although she remained active as a pianist and coach, especially in the accompaniment of lieder.

The selections on the present recording, including the Italian Variations, g minor English suite, French Overture and Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue were recorded between 1954 and the late 1960s. This CD, issued by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, is surprisingly poorly produced for an official document of the work of one of

Canada's leading figures in the harpsichord revival. However, the performances reveal a distinctive musical personality, displaying a powerful rhythmic approach (in the prelude to the third English Suite, for example) and a sense of grandeur and occasion which is perhaps one element lacking in the playing of many of our own contemporary harpsichordists. Kraus, like Landowska, sometimes goes overboard, distorting the rhythm to such an extent that the threads are lost. The sarabandes, for example, as well as being ponderously slow, disintegrate into arrhythmic incoherence. The (unidentified) harpsichords sound like production model Wittmayers and Neuperts: instruments which Kraus for some reason favoured throughout much of her career. The registration changes are frequent (and distracting, occasionally ridiculous) and the instruments are sometimes not too well in tune. Moreover (for example in *bourrée I* of the French Overture), some of Kraus's overly short, choppy articulations fail to register at all on these not-very-distinguished German factory harpsichords. A certain integrity, present in the sound of the Pleyel, is entirely absent in the steely and brittle tone of these instruments.

The rather slapdash production values noted earlier extend to the cover photograph, which features an unidentified modern copy of a Flemish virginal, a choice whose relevance would no doubt have escaped Greta Kraus as surely as it does this reviewer. The accompanying booklet contains several well-chosen and interesting photographs of Kraus at different stages of her life, as well as a rather patchy article (by the producer) which oscillates uneasily between recounting her career and providing the barest possible introduction to the music. (I would, for example, dispute the author's brave assessment of Bach's *Chromatic Fantasy* as one of his "lesser-known keyboard works".) Most of the useful information is contained in quotations from Kraus herself. The material included here is described as representing the "best of her analogue recordings", a judgement which is fiercely disputed by some of her associates with whom I have spoken. However, we must be grateful for what we have, although Kraus's surviving recordings are, according to those who knew her, far more numerous than the present issue leads us to believe.

With *Rafael Puyana*'s disc of Bach (solo music by Johann Sebastian and duets by Wilhelm Friedemann and Johann Christian) we turn to a still active artist who bridges the gap between the world of Landowska (with whom Puyana

studied in the 1950s) and our own. This 1963 recording was made on a 'Puyana' style Pleyel, almost identical to the instrument of his mentor, and it is interesting to hear this harpsichord recorded in the relatively high fidelity sound of 1963. As with Landowska's performances Puyana's rhythm is what is most immediately compelling, as well as the sense of grandeur which both teacher and pupil could so effectively convey. It was Rafael Puyana who ultimately acquired the three-manual harpsichord by H A Hass which Landowska had coveted, and it is instructive to compare its sound (Puyana has recorded several memorable programmes on it, including an exceptional two-disc set of Scarlatti sonatas for Harmonia Mundi) with the Pleyel which the Hass' glorious example is supposed to have helped inspire. I found it interesting to compare Puyana's phrasing and articulation on this early recording with his own later performances on the Hass and other antique harpsichords. Whereas here he can often sound mannered and fussy, the registration changes sometimes directly contradicting the natural phrase structure of the music, on the later recordings Puyana seems entirely natural and much more vocal in his inspiration. Even on this disc, the rhythm and sense of colour are never in doubt. Puyana is ably assisted by his student Genoveva Galvez in the A major duet (for two performers on one harpsichord) by J. C. Bach, and in the Concerto a duoi Cembali Concertati by W. F. Bach. Incidentally, the solo Concerto in G major by Bach *père*, is BWV 986: the original model still unidentified. Recommended.

Peter Watchorn

J S Bach

Die Kunst der Fuge BWV 1080
Isolde Ahlgren (pedal harpsichord)
Friederike Resele (2nd harpsichord)
Tudor CD 7030 (2 CDs)

Bach's *Die Kunst der Fuge* is now so familiar as undisputed keyboard repertoire that, with the release of the present issue, it is timely to recall that this was not always the case. In the early 1950s, the debate concerning the work's original performance medium was waged among musicologists and performers alike. One of the first advocates for performance on the harpsichord, in this case with an independent pedal, was the Viennese harpsichordist Isolde Ahlgren. In 1952 she announced that, based on the research of the musicologist Heinrich Husmann, an advocate of keyboard performance for the work (and

personal friend of Ahlgrimm), she would include *Die Kunst der Fuge* as the final concert of one of her famous Bach-Cycle marathons (which she performed, as always, entirely from memory). According to Ahlgrimm, the young Gustav Leonhardt, newly arrived on the scene as harpsichord professor at the Vienna Academy, beat her to the punch by a couple of months and gave the first performance of the work on the harpsichord. Her own followed shortly after.

In 1954, Ahlgrimm recorded *Die Kunst der Fuge* for Philips as part of her *Complete Works for Harpsichord* series. The present recording dates from thirteen years later, after Ahlgrimm had presented the work many times in concert throughout Europe to outstanding critical acclaim, especially in Holland, where her records were well distributed. Having completed her Bach recordings for Philips by 1956 (including the harpsichord concertos, *Musical Offering* and sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord with a young Nikolaus Harnoncourt, all using old string instruments at low-pitch), by the mid-1960s Ahlgrimm was invited to repeat the exercise for the short-lived Swiss company, Belvedere, a venture which resulted in several issues. By 1967, when the present *Kunst der Fuge* recording was made, the company had dissolved and was succeeded by another Zürich-based company, Tudor.

Essentially, what we have here is a repeat of Ahlgrimm's more famous reading for Philips. This one is more dryly recorded (once again, as in 1954, in Vienna), and features slightly faster tempos, perhaps as a reaction to the drier acoustic. Precisely the same instruments, a 1937 Ammer harpsichord made in Eisenberg (not Passau as stated in the accompanying notes) and pedal instrument from 1941 were used in both recordings. Ahlgrimm's playing, in a style which she originated in the 1930s, provides an entirely different approach to the harpsichord from Landowska, Kraus and Puyana. A glance at the photograph on the booklet of the present issue will partially explain: this particular Ammer instrument was equipped, at Ahlgrimm's request, with hand stops. The result is that there are virtually no changes of register within single movements. The playing is, in comparison to that of the Landowska school, far more straightforward and relaxed (compare Ahlgrimm's hand position, visible in the photo on the back of the accompanying booklet with Landowska's famous 'claw') and in it we can hear the origin of much which is now taken for granted in harpsichord performance. The French-style fugues

are performed with sharp overdotting, and the articulation and phrasing clearly reflect the structure of the music. Overall, the playing seems much less dated than the instrumental sound, although Ahlgrimm's approach to articulation changed radically after 1972, when she discarded the two Ammers in favour of a French-style instrument by David Rubio. She never distorts the music through the use of special registration effects and other liberties. When Landowska's theatrical style was still all the rage, Ahlgrimm was heavily criticised for her austere approach. The sound of the pre-war Ammer harpsichord, certainly not 'authentic' by today's standards is, however, equally far removed from the tonal deficiencies of that firm's products dating from the immediate post-war period (these may be heard, for example, on Zuzana Ruzickova's Bach recordings for Supraphon), which came to equal the worst of the German *Seriens-Instrumente*.

For the mirror fugues for two harpsichords, Ahlgrimm was ably assisted, as in 1954, by her highly gifted student, Friederike Bretschneider - Resele (playing a second Ammer from 1941, on which Ahlgrimm had recorded the earliest of her *Complete Works* series for Philips in the early fifties). Unfortunately, the present issue excludes the chorale-prelude *Wem wir in höchsten Nöthen sind*, unlike the earlier recording for Philips (although Philips eliminated it, also, from their 1974 re-release of Ahlgrimm's Bach recordings). Though not musically relevant to *Die Kunst der Fuge*, the piece was included in the first edition, and Ahlgrimm's performance of it was very beautiful. The present issue, which presents the first eleven fugues in Bach's own order, and ends with the final incomplete four-part fugue, is of exceptional musical as well as historical interest. Let's hope that its appearance will inspire the Dutch company Philips to digitally re-master and issue Isolde Ahlgrimm's *Complete Works for Harpsichord* Bach recordings, which are crucial to our understanding of the development of Bach performance on the harpsichord in the second half of the 20th century.

Peter Watchorn

The Bones of All Men

Philip Pickett, Richard Thompson & The Fairport Rhythm Section
Hannibal HNCH 1416

The Bones of All Men might be described as folk / early music fusion. It succeeds much better than most examples of crossover because Richard

Thompson, Simon Nicol, Dave Pegg, Dave Mattacks are all genuine folk-rock players; Phil Pickett, who played with the Albion Band but is now better known as director of the New London Consort, is joined by keyboardist Sharona Joshua and medieval fiddler Pavlo Beznosiuk, so that the personnel are genuinely a mix from both worlds — rather than early musicians simply attempting to hype up their product (as some recent groups, who shall remain anonymous, have done). I reckon this is an ideal CD to give the harpsichordist for Christmas, as all the music is based on early keyboard sources. An ideal party game on Boxing Day would be to see how many pieces you can name — and, for bonus points, identify their sources.

PH

Czech "Degenerate Music": Hans Krásá: Chamber Music (complete)
Kocian Quartet, Zuzana Růžičková (harpsichord)
Praga Digitals PRD 250 106

The accompanying notes on Krásá's works in this recording list musical characteristics which fit the Nazi term "degenerate music": generally atonal; jazz influenced; Jewish authorship. The *Chamber Music* of 1935 or 1936 (the notes separately list both years as the year of composition) is based on an earlier piece of popular acclaim, *Anna's Song*, which Krásá wrote for a play by Adolf Hoffmeister, and which demonstrates more or less - though mostly less - these particular characteristics.

This is the first recording of the *Chamber Music*, one which allows harpsichordists to compare and ultimately pair this work in concert with the de Falla *Concerto* completed ten years earlier. The first of the two movements alternates intriguing, angular lyric writing with a *perpetuo moto*, often referencing tonal centres but never quite giving them away to the listener.

The second movement opens with a saxophone solo, subsequently taken up by other instruments and eventually joined by the harpsichord one and a half minutes on. The overt cabaret atmosphere of this movement makes me think that this piece was conceived for an ensemble of eight equal instruments with the sparse keyboard part originally intended for piano. Indeed, the solo harpsichordist only plays for three of its six minutes, and even then the contribution consists predominantly of occasional sections of stabbed or arpeggiated chords with brief melodic fragments; there is little